

Report and Documentary History for

# Abel's Cottage, 43 High Street, Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire

*Site Code: LON-A*

*from*

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

**by**

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. Abel's Cottage, Long Crendon from the east

© N W Alcock and contributors 2012. Copyright in this document is retained under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, with all rights reserved including publication. Copyright in illustrations is reserved to the original copyright holder.

*Oxbow Books*

## LON-A: ABEL'S COTTAGE, 43 HIGH STREET, LONG CRENDON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 6966 0894

Survey Date: January 1989

By: D. Miles

### Illustrations:

	Page
1. View	1
2. Ground floor plan	2
3. Section of truss T2	3
4. Part of the 1827 map of Long Crendon	5
5. Part of the 1910 'Domesday' map of Long Crendon	5

This report has been compiled using notes provided by Catherine Murray, who also produced the plan. Documentary history by Nat Alcock and Eric Sewell, building on the work of John Chenevix Trench†.

*For court roll and documentary source references, see the bibliography of primary sources:*

### Abbreviations:

CBS Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies

TNA The National Archives

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

### SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: Abel's Cottage is a timber-framed cruck house oriented north-south along the west side of the High Street and set slightly back from the street. It now has two bays and probably originally had a lean-to third bay to the south. The crucks are of type 'W', terminating just above the collar. The upper end was at the north, with a floored chamber at first floor level. Bay 2 would have been the open hall. The site of the open hearth may well have been at or near the position of the present chimney stack adjacent to truss 3. The latter is filled, with smoke-blackening running right up to the edge of the truss. The purlins do not continue, but the south face of the truss is not very weathered, suggesting the presence of a further lean-to bay, presumably for service. A felling date range of **1506-1536** has been obtained.

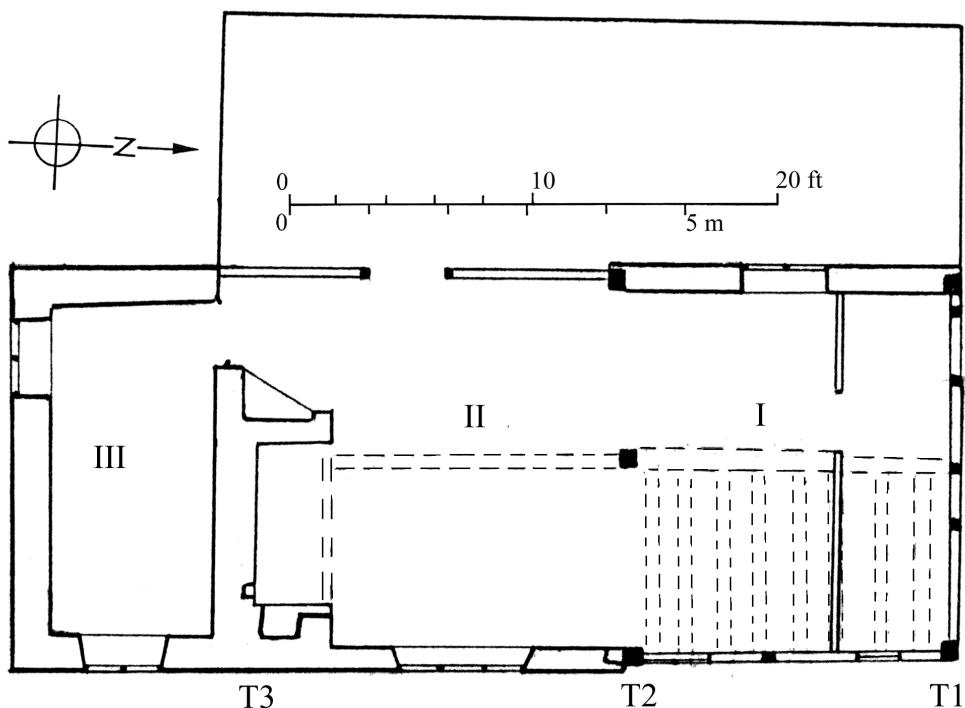


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

PHASE 2: Probably in the seventeenth century, the rubble stone chimney stack was inserted. This included apparently two phases of bread ovens, since evidence for one exists in both the left and right fireplace reveals. The hall was probably floored over at this time. Much of the original timber-framed walling was also replaced in stone. The present structure of bay III, a stone-built lean-to, probably dates from this phase.

PHASE 3: In the eighteenth century various features were altered, including some of the windows, and a partition of 3in studs was inserted in the northern bay.

## STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Three cruck trusses remain, all with type 'W' apexes. Although it was not possible to gain access to the upper part of the roof space above the ceiling, it can be seen that the collars extend beyond the cruck blades to support the purlins. The tiebeams carry the wall plates, and are supported at the outer ends by wall posts which are birdsmouthed into the backs of the cruck blades. The crucks measure on average 7½in thick and are between 9½in and 6in wide. The collar to T2 is 6½in thick and 7in high and is slightly cambered. There is a large peg hole in the upper-centre of the collar.

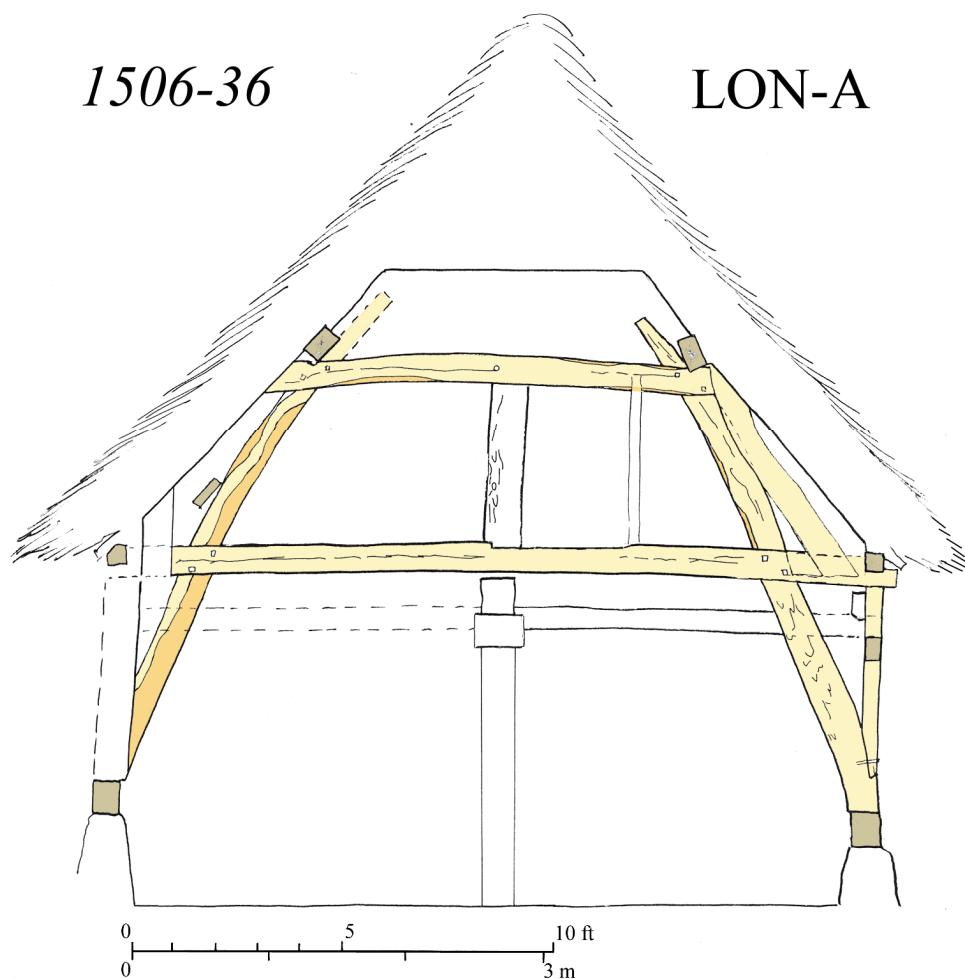


Fig. 3. Section of Truss T2

An interesting feature of truss 3 is that the tiebeam is trenched into the outside (S) face of the front cruck blade, but the inside of the rear blade. The southern face of T3 is mostly concealed, but the undersides of the timbers and the north face are heavily soot encrusted (several millimetres thick). The underside of the collar of T3 does not have any stave sockets, but carries the remains of staves nailed to the crucks. In this truss, the crucks measure 14 x 7in, the heavily cambered tie 6 x 6in, and the collar 9in

x 7in. Only one assembly mark was seen, a triple stroke on the south-east face of the collar on T2. This supports the former presence of a further bay to the south, with the missing end truss being originally numbered I.

The roof structure over bays I and II is essentially complete. The purlins measure about 5 x 9in with wind-braces, of which three remain in bay II, with evidence for the fourth, and for a similar four in bay I. The purlins do not extend beyond T3. The rafters are approximately 5 x 2½in in size, laid flat at 17in centres.

The floor structure in bay I appears to be original, at least in the eastern half. The chamfered axial beam is 12in wide and on the east side carries eight joists measuring 6 x 7in, of both oak and elm. They are jointed to the axial beam with soffit-tenon joints 1½in thick and 4in long. The joists to the west of the axial beam are later replacements, 4½ - 5in wide and entirely of elm. The original support for the inner end of the axial beam has been lost, and a re-used section of sill now props it. The beam never connected with the tiebeam, the latter being about 12in higher. Some original wall framing survives on the east elevation in bay I, with a very cambered mid-rail in bay II. Most of the west wall has been replaced in either stone or modern timber-framing.

Most main timbers used in the construction of the building were converted from whole trees. Although the centre of the tree was often to one side of the crucks and collars, suggesting the trees may have been quartered or halved, all four surfaces were dressed with an axe. The windbrace to truss 2 seems to have been both sawn, and cleaved.

**PHASE 2:** The axial beam of the inserted hall floor is 6½in wide, chamfered with an ogee stop at the fireplace end. At the north end it bears on the end of the axial beam in bay I. The joists are between 3 and 4in square and on the front side rest on a chamfered half-beam measuring 7½ x 3½in.

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

*Sampling Comments:* Eight samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 11 January 1989.

### TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample		Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
Code	Sample Location						
LON-A01	Rear cruck blade truss T2	36 NM	18	—	—	—	—
LON-A02	Front cruck blade truss T2	56	00	—	—	—	—
LON-A03	Tiebeam truss T2	43	05	—	—	—	—
LON-A04	Collar truss T2	26 NM	—	—	—	—	—
LON-A05	Rear cruck blade truss T3	NM	—	—	—	—	—
LON-A06	Wind brace, front, bay I	150	15	1356	1490	1505	3a
LON-A07	Front purlin bay I	59	24	—	—	—	—
LON-A08	Front cruck blade truss T1	NM	—	—	—	—	—

Site sequences: (sample 6 only), 150 rings long dated 1356-1505 with t-values of 5.1 (OXFORD), 6.2 (BRE-A, the site sequence of Bremhill Farm Barn, Calne, Wilts, VA22.91).

95% felling date range: 1506-1531 (previous 1506-1528). OxCal refined: **1506-1536**.

## DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

The 1827 Map (Fig. 4) associates Henry Shrimpton with the later 43-7 High Street (now Abel and Stocks Cottage and The Old Bakery), and William Shrimpton with the much smaller plot in the corner of the croft, no 49 (Bell Cottage), which from the topographical relationship would seem to have originated as part of the same property. Henry Shrimpton, who occupied the house himself, was a shoemaker who features in the court rolls only as an occupier, and when elected a tithingman.

The 1910 map (Fig. 5) shows nos. 43-5 and 47 divided between hereditaments 416 and 418 (including also 417 and 419), each comprising two small cottages; the former had an acreage of 1r 29p, and paid a quit rent of 2s 2d (to an unspecified lord). Both were owned by Mrs Elizabeth Cook and were described as small cottages with two bedrooms and two downstairs rooms. No deeds have been located for either property.<sup>1</sup> No clear identification with census occupants can be made.

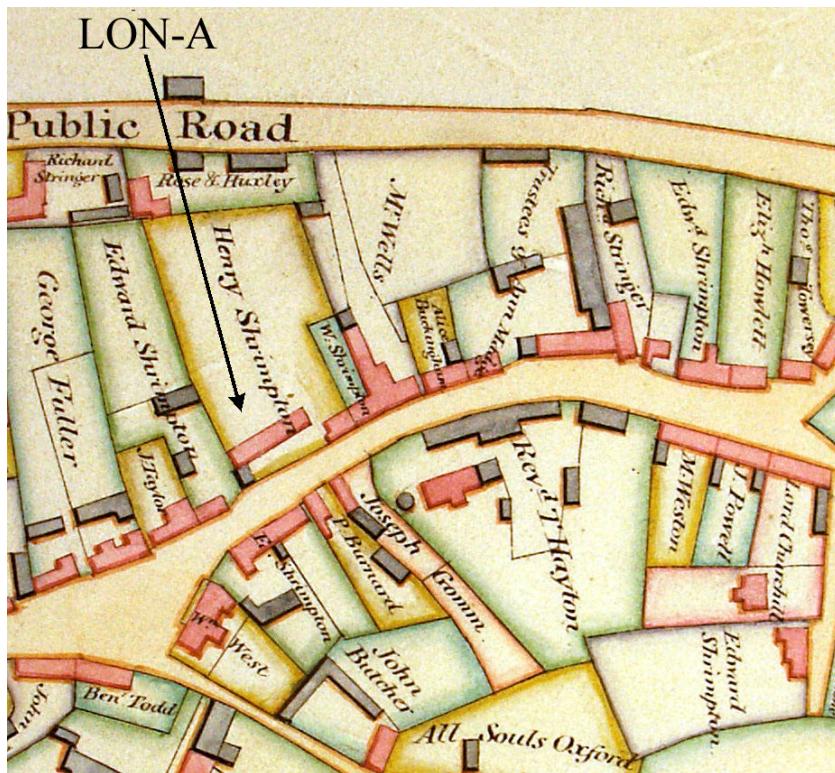


Fig. 4. Part of the 1827 map of Long Crendon (CBS IR/95/Q).

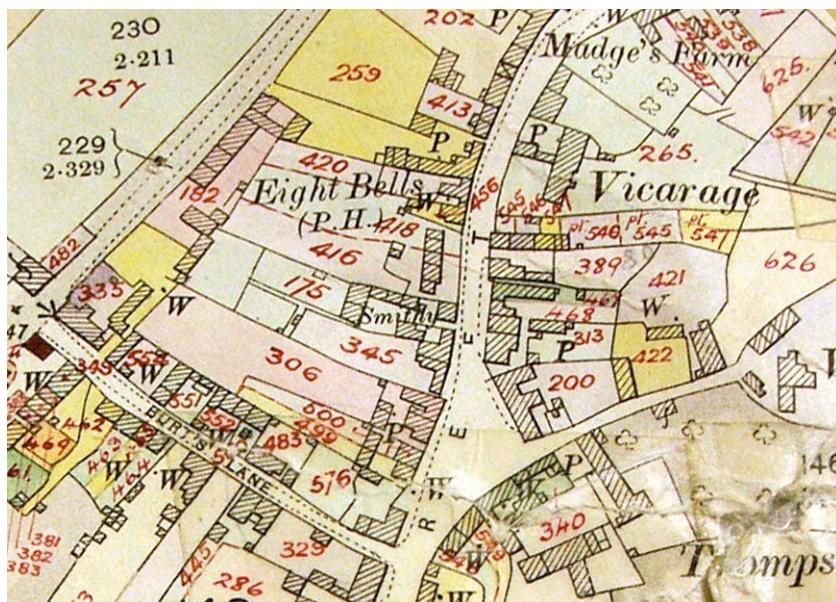


Fig. 5. Part of the 1910 map of Long Crendon (TNA IR 126/1/345).

<sup>1</sup> Land Registry title BM163149 relates to no. 45; no. 43 is not registered. The register for no. 45 refers to a conveyance of 1<sup>st</sup> July 1952, Phyllis Mabel Jones to Charles Brooks, in which it was Lot 3, and no. 43 was Lot 4.

Surprisingly, both properties paid Land Tax before the 1826 revision of the assessments, although they cannot be traced back to the start of the assessments. They appear to be respectively:

(a) (43-7 High Street)

1826 Henry Shrimpton, occ. self, house & garden 7s-0d; 1821-5 4s 1½d  
1816 William Shrimpton, occ. self, 4s 1½d  
1811 Richard Shrimpton, occ. John Seers, 4s 1½d; 1809-10 occ. Wm Sharp  
(not identifiable unambiguously earlier)

(b) (49 High Street)

1826 Henry William Shrimpton, occ. self, house 2s-6d  
1821-5 William, occ. self, 1s 6d (1821 W H Shrimpton).  
(not identifiable earlier)

*Deeds for 49 High Street*

A group of deeds, of which the first is endorsed ‘The deed of the house next to the 8 Bells’, can be linked to no. 49 High Street (1910 hereditament 456, immediately west of the Eight Bells, hereditament 420 [LON-S]), both through this endorsement and from the owners listed.<sup>2</sup> The first deed (27 Sept 1680) recites a 999 year lease (made on 1 Dec 1662) by Thomas Benham of Peppers Hill, Shabbington to Thomas Rawlins alias Prentice, shepherd, of a little plot of ground where Rawlins had built a dwelling house, measuring 97 ft E-W & 25 ft N-S (close to the size of no. 47); this had been assigned to Thomas Fryer and was then assigned to Richard Carter. The lease was assigned by the latter’s grand-daughters in 1775 and assigned again in 1778. In 1782, it was acquired by John Towersey, needle-maker, who mortgaged it in 1791 to John Shrimpton, victualler, and in 1813 sold it to William Henry Shrimpton, needlemaker (the W. Shrimpton on the 1827 map).

*Documents for 12 Chearsley Road, the Rose & Huxley farm*

The topography also suggests that the property at the rear of Abel Cottage, (a farmhouse belonging to Rose & Huxley in 1827, now Coombe Cottage, 12 Chearsley Road) might also have been cut off from the same holding. Its ownership can be traced back to the will of Giles Burrows (1758, proved 1763).<sup>3</sup> He left his freehold property in Long Crendon to John Wollaston and Henry West, from whom it passed to Mary and Elizabeth West; they married Thomas Huxley and John Rose. In 1827, they were allocated 5 acres in lieu of their 15 acres of open field land (corresponding to ½ yardland approximately). This farm had apparently formed part of the lands settled in 1735 on Burrows’s marriage to Mary (née Randolph), the widow of Henry Reynolds, but nothing is known of it earlier. This property can also be identified in the Land Tax, held by Phyllis West from 1782 to 1811 (paying £1 then £1 7d and then £1 2s 2d), then by Rose and Huxley.<sup>4</sup>

*Conclusions*

It seems certain that Abel's Cottage was freehold from before 1662, and the relatively substantial quit-rent recorded in 1910 implies that it had been enfranchised, rather than being a medieval freeholding. It had most been probably a Dormer copyhold, since other evidence suggests the likelihood of a block of Dormer property on this side of High Street.<sup>5</sup> Whether it was originally a yardland holding or a cottage cannot yet be established.

---

<sup>2</sup> The deeds are: CBS, D-HO/340, /396, /419, /425, /440, /456, /476 (1680-1845).

<sup>3</sup> TNA, PROB 11/887; see also CBS, D-PC/59, (1773 abstract of title)

<sup>4</sup> Phillis West also paid £18 6s 5d in 1798-1801 for a much larger holding. The farm was perhaps sold or amalgamated with another at enclosure, as it cannot be identified after 1825.

<sup>5</sup> See LON-S, The Eight Bells.